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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 007179

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KPAL IS IZ SA SY JO

SUBJECT: IRAQ, PEACE PROCESS, SYRIA DOMINATE LANTOS VISIT
TO JORDAN

REF: A. DAMASCUS 4931

1B. DAMASCUS 5039

Classified By: CDA David Hale for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) During separate meetings with King Abdullah, GID Director General Sa'ad Kheir, and Foreign Minister Marwan Muasher, in Amman on August 19, Congressman Tom Lantos focused on the positive in Jordan and criticized leaders from neighboring Arab countries. The Jordanians reiterated their support for the Allawi government, but expressed their growing concern about Iran's activities in Iraq. They also expressed their frustration with the Palestinian leadership but insisted that any Israeli withdrawal be consistent with the roadmap. Syrian and Saudi border issues also permeated the discussions, and Jordanian frustration with Damascus was evident. END SUMMARY.

CONCERNS IN IRAQ

12. (C) During a series of meetings with CODEL Lantos on August 19, Jordanian officials clearly stated their steadfast support of the Iraqi Interim Government, but added that they are watching developments in Iraq with great concern. GID Director Kheir believed the situation in Iraq is crystallizing and that conditions will improve even more after the up-coming elections. He described his concern over increased talk of factionalization between Sunni, Shiite and Kurd. Kheir said that he will advise Allawi on his next visit to Jordan to create another Deputy Prime Minister post and appoint a Sunni to balance out the current DPM post occupied by a Shiite. He also expressed concern over Iran's role, arguing that Tehran benefits from instability in Iraq. Kheir called Sistani "an Iranian illegal immigrant in Iraq" and maintained that he should not play a political role.

FRUSTRATIONS WITH PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP

13. (C) Kheir expressed astonishment at the incompetence of PA leadership. He noted that Prime Minister Sharon had told him often that he has invited the Palestinian Prime Minister to talk with him, but he has refused. Kheir hinted that this was most likely a result of Arafat's refusal to authorize such a meeting as it would diminish his stature. Kheir also reiterated the King's complaint that PA leaders always blame their Arab neighbors for their difficulties without admitting fault themselves. In a separate meeting, FM Muasher also stated that Arafat must turn over more power to the Palestinian Authority in order for the peace process to move forward. He insisted that the Gaza disengagement must be part of a fuller Israeli withdrawal in accordance with the roadmap, the ultimate objective being a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza.

SYRIAN AND SAUDI BORDER SECURITY

14. (C) Kheir highlighted the Syrian government's inability or unwillingness to control its border with Iraq. He also told Lantos that Syria was receiving arms from Iran to support Hamas and Hizballah. Kheir also complained about the SARG's stubbornness on Syrian-Jordanian border issues. (See septel on Jordanian PM Al-Fayez's recent visit to Syria.) When Lantos asked Muasher what kind of support the United States could offer Jordan, Muasher replied that Jordan needs additional military/border security aid. Muasher claimed that the King feared that what had so far been dealt with behind closed doors could eventually erupt into open confrontation between Syria and Jordan. The King was clearly frustrated with Syrian leadership, but he maintained that he still has good relations with Bashar. He said that Bashar always said the right thing but never followed it up with any action.

15. (C) Kheir also identified the Saudi-Iraqi border as a source of infiltration into Iraq of arms and militants. As he explained it, the Saudi government would prefer that these

elements enter into Iraq so that they are no longer a threat to the Saudi regime. Kheir noted that the GOJ had trained many Saudi security units, but he is not confident that the Saudi security forces overall have the ability to meet the internal threat confronting them.

6) (U) CODEL Lantos did not have an opportunity to clear this cable.

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HALE